

Collaboration for Transformation: Community–Campus Engagement for Just and Sustainable Food Systems

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Abstract

This article focuses on the collaborations between academics and community-based organizations seeking to fundamentally reorganize the way food is produced, distributed, and consumed as well as valued. The central research question investigates whether and how the growth of community–campus engagement (CCE) can strengthen food movements. Drawing on an analysis of 5 case studies in Canada, research demonstrated that when it is part of relationships based on mutual benefit and reciprocity, CCE can—and does—play an important role in building food movements. Different orientations toward CCE are discussed in terms of their varying assumptions and implications for how partners work together.

Introduction

There is a growing interest in the “civic university” as a way to reestablish the legitimacy of academia in the eyes of the general public (*Barnett, 2007; Powell & Dayson, 2013*). One way this manifests is through increased commitment on the part of institutions and research funders to community service-learning (CSL), community-based research (CBR), and participatory action research (PAR; *Russell & Flynn 2001; Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003*). These teaching, research, and engagement methods make campuses more relevant to the communities in which they are based while giving students more meaningful learning experiences. There are important distinctions between each of these forms of engagement, but our focus in this article is on their common element: the relationship between community-based organizations and colleges or universities, often mediated by specific faculty members and organizational representatives. In this article, we discuss community–campus engagement (CCE), but we noted when case studies were concerned with specific forms of CCE in teaching or research.

Despite numerous advancements and successes, critics have argued that CCE often privileges campuses and their constituencies and fails to adequately consider and/or address community needs (Bortolin, 2011; Cronley, Madden, & Davis, 2015; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). The agricultural sciences, for example, have long been developing a range of industry-focused technologies across food systems, ostensibly through partnership and in accordance with community interests. Critics, however, point to the ways that a focus on technological development (e.g., biotechnology) contributes to the alienation of people from the systems that bring food to their plates as well as increased ecological, health, and social problems (Kloppenborg, 2005; Kneen, 1999). These criticisms suggest the need to further investigate partnership dynamics to better understand the relationships and impacts of CCE on all parties involved.

The topic of food systems provides an opportunity to investigate the ways that diverse groups come together around common goals, specifically the engagement between community groups and academic institutions. We define *food movements* as networks of individuals, organizations, and groups that come together to challenge the logics of the dominant food system and to create viable solutions that offer prospects for a more socially just and ecologically sustainable world (Levkoe, 2014). Research undertaken by academics and community practitioners on sustainable food systems has been foundational to developing a critical and informed analysis for both theory and practice (Wakefield, 2007). Scholars have played an integral role, offering critical and engaged reflections about food movements' history, structure, and possible directions (see Allen, 2004; Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011; Levkoe, 2014). Further, campuses have long been vibrant spaces for student and faculty activism for localized projects and broader campaigns to build just and sustainable food systems (see Barlett, 2011; Friedmann, 2007). In this article, we focus on the interface between academics engaged in collaborative projects with community organizations and food movements, with the goal of fundamentally reorganizing the way food is produced, distributed, and consumed as well as valued. We acknowledge that the term "community" is an extremely broad category that includes many different kinds of actors, from highly professionalized and institutionalized individuals to networks of grassroots activists. In this article, we refer primarily to our community partners as community-based and civil society organizations yet acknowledge the inclusion of a broader range of organizational forms. Our central research question investigates whether and how

the growth of campus engagement with community-based organizations can strengthen food movements in Canada.

We address the underexplored nature of CCE relationships among community-based and academic partners with explicit goals of social and environmental change. Focusing on food movements, we fill this gap by providing an empirical investigation of five CCE case studies affiliated with the Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE; <http://carleton.ca/communityfirst/>) Community Food Security Hub. CFICE is a participatory action research project that examines how community-based organizations define, evaluate, and utilize the value created by CCE and how communities can exert more control over the design of engagement activities. In its initial phase, CFICE research was carried out through four thematic hubs: Poverty Reduction, Community Environmental Sustainability, Violence Against Women, and Community Food Security (CFS), with a fifth hub focused on knowledge mobilization across the projects. The CFS Hub works closely with Food Secure Canada/Réseau pour une alimentation durable (FSC/RAD), which was established in 2004 as a pan-Canadian alliance of organizations and individuals working together to build a more just and sustainable food system for all. To achieve deep and lasting change, FSC/RAD recognizes that solutions must be rooted in communities, involve democratic participation and debate, and work in harmony with ecological systems. Central to this work is their support of collaborative networks that facilitate research and enhance learning in regard to food systems projects and campaigns. Together, FSC/RAD and the CFS Hub work to build stronger links between research and policy advocacy and to increase collaboration among civil society organizations, particularly in knowledge production. Working with academic and community coleads within each of the case study projects, the CFS Hub explores various partnership models to channel lessons learned into existing and future CCE projects.

The present research forged new ground in two ways. First, it explored the nature and potential of community and academic partnerships within food movements. Drawing on five distinct cases, our work demonstrated that when defined by relationships based on mutual benefit and reciprocity, CCE can—and already does—play an important role in building more just and sustainable food systems. Second, the empirical evidence from our five case studies challenges a simplistic interpretation of the differences between “conventional” and “transformational” CCE orientations that we identified in existing literature. We agree that a more trans-

formational orientation (e.g., the orientation of “scholar-activists”) is particularly attuned to the needs and interests of social movement actors. However, our diverse cases also show that (a) orientations can shift over time, and (b) *both* orientations toward CCE, when undertaken with a high level of critical reflexivity (i.e., constantly checking ourselves and our assumptions as we engage), ongoing communication, and flexibility, *can* enhance social movements’ efforts to achieve transformative social and environmental change.

This study shows how participant orientations toward, and assumptions about, CCE have significant implications for what partners can achieve together. Although we are not the first to observe and describe differences in CCE orientations, the diversity in our cases allowed us to draw a nuanced set of conclusions regarding the implications of these variations for academic engagement with social movements. To set the stage, in the next section, we draw on a range of literature to specify the qualities of “conventional” versus “transformational” orientations toward CCE, paying particular attention to the roles that academics (including students) play in relation to social movements. Turning to our five case studies, we describe our research methods and our cases, then highlight our study’s results. In the description and analysis of our data, we focus on two key themes that speak to partnership dynamics in food movements: (1) the (multiple) roles played by both community-based and campus-based partners involved in these kinds of CCE projects and (2) the tensions that arise in relation to roles and how these tensions can be addressed. Analysis of these themes leads to our observations that reflexivity, communication, and flexibility over time are of particular importance for successful academic engagement with social movements. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of our research for food movements.

Contributions of Community–Campus Engagement to Social Movement Building

At the most basic level, CCE can be described as a situation in which campus-based actors (including postsecondary students, postdoctoral fellows, instructors, professors, and their institutions) work in partnership with practitioners in various sectors of the broader community (including the private, public, and nonprofit sectors). According to Jassawalla and Sashittal (1998), these types of partnerships represent “the coming together of diverse interests and people to achieve a common purpose via interactions, information sharing, and coordination of activities” (p. 239). Central

to these relationships is the assumption that a project is mutually beneficial to all parties through an “exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity” (*Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2015, p. 2*). However, not all relationships and intended outcomes are the same. In this section, we draw on a range of scholarly literatures to help identify and articulate the differences between “conventional” and “transformational” orientations toward CCE.

A Spectrum of Orientations: From Conventional to Transformational

Conventional orientations to CCE that focus on expanding field experiences (e.g., internships, practica), content knowledge, and cultural competencies have become widespread on North American campuses in recent decades. Dan Butin (2010) described this approach to CCE as *technical* and *cultural*, focusing on pedagogical effectiveness enhanced through real-world links and on the meanings of practice for the individuals and institutions involved. Successful outcomes include supporting the work of community-based organizations (e.g., through administration, front-line work, and strategic planning), educating students (e.g., via research and skill development, practical experience, and understanding broader social issues), and improving the quality of academic research (e.g., by grounding research in lived experiences; *Buys & Bursnall, 2007*).

However, in many cases, conventional approaches do not engage deeply with community groups, challenge systems of inequality, or endeavor to alter social and ecological systems (*Butcher, Bezzina, & Moran, 2011; McBride, Brav, Menon, & Sherraden, 2006; Mitchell, 2008*). For example, although CSL may promote academic research and teaching goals, practitioners have been criticized for not recognizing local knowledge production, supporting community needs, or promoting broader policy change (*Bickford & Reynolds, 2002; Butin, 2005; Swords & Kiely, 2010*). Instead, CSL frequently privileges academic needs and is focused on professionalization, institutionalization, and job readiness for students (*Levkoe, Brail, & Daniere, 2014; Mitchell, 2008; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000*). Put simply, despite positive outcomes, critics have noted that many of the relationships being forged between campuses and communities adopting a conventional CCE orientation are not directly concerned with social and environmental change. Without a critical approach, Mitchell (2008) argued, CCE projects can result in the cooptation of higher education and research by powerful actors who do not have community interests at heart. Calhoun (2008) agreed, noting

that although university rhetoric promotes the interdisciplinary and social contributions of academic knowledge, many scholars are limited in their ability to actually meet these goals.

At the other end of the spectrum, Paulo Freire's lifelong practice and writing on critical and engaged pedagogy provides a framework for thinking about CCE as a politicized form of social movement building—that is, as transformational. Instead of merely teaching the instrumental and decontextualized skills of reading and writing, Freire called for educators to become participants in a political process through education as the path to liberation. Freire (2000) wrote of this approach as “a pedagogy, which must be forged with, not for, the oppressed (whether individuals or peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity” (p. 48). These ideas were articulated in the concept of *conscientization*, in which people become aware of their oppression and, through praxis, aim to transform institutions of power. Implicit in this approach is the belief that CCE can play a vital role, not just in supporting social change efforts, but also as an integral part of social movements. This orientation fits closely with the phenomenon that Butin (2010) referred to as (1) *political* CCE, in which institutions of higher learning act as agents of empowerment of historically disempowered groups in society to advance a new worldview emphasizing social justice, and (2) *antifoundational* CCE, which fosters doubt as a prerequisite for thoughtful deliberation.

Adopting this transformational perspective, Swords & Kiely (2010) described the ways that CCE can function as a democratizing and counternormative approach for supporting social movements through addressing structural problems in collaborative partnership with community-based practitioners. Specifically, they called for the integration of innovative pedagogy, institutionalization (e.g., the way that initiatives support or preclude meaningful CCE), critical action-based research (e.g., the coconstruction of knowledge that better understands and improves the conditions of individuals, organizations, and policies), and community development (e.g., developing a movement-building vision) into a more robust model for community–campus partnerships. These ideals relate closely to Mitchell's (2008) description of a critical approach to CSL that “is unapologetic in its aim to dismantle structures of injustice” (p. 50). She argued that this approach demands an explicit social change orientation, a redistribution of power, and authentic relationships as central to the classroom and community experience.

These two orientations of CCE, conventional and transformational, suggest a range of possibilities—at opposite poles, but

also in between. Each type of engagement involves assumptions about who is engaged with whom and why, how knowledge or solutions are sought, who should be doing the different types of work required, and how the partners should relate to one another. Further, the literature reviewed here suggests that certain forms of CCE might be better aligned with social movements and that when the alignment is problematic, we might expect tensions or counter-productive activities. The vision of a transformative CCE, one built on mutual benefit and reciprocity, is important because it speaks to the interests of social movements in transformative change.

Building Horizontal Relationships

There is a long history of campus contributions to social movement activity. In the 1960s and 1970s, many activists were based on university campuses, and scholarship benefited from these close connections, which also made campuses hubs for social movement organizing. Despite these advancements, the connections between movement scholars and activists have been dramatically weakened over the past decades. Corteau, Haynes, and Ryan (2005) wrote that even as movement scholarship “has become more abundant and sophisticated... the scholar-activist connections that fueled previous movement scholarship’s development have been largely lost” (p. xi). This does not discount the valuable contributions of theoretical analysis that social movement scholarship provides; however, in many cases scholarship has become detached from the movements themselves, making it inaccessible or irrelevant to activists (Bevington & Dixon, 2005; Dempsey & Rowe, 2004; Flacks, 2005).

Movement-based academic and community engagement, however, can take place through horizontal and integrated collaborative partnerships. This approach fits well with the ideas of transformative CCE orientations. Drawing on her scholarly work in Latin-American and Spanish contexts, Zusman (2004) explained her adoption of a horizontal engagement where knowledge and accountability are shared between colleagues, in contrast to traditional hierarchical relationships. Rather than conceive of the relationship between activists and scholars as purely academic-led empirical investigation, Zusman argued that relationships “should evolve out of a commitment to question political, social and economic conditions through recognition that the production of knowledge, and alternative political practice, is a collective, and horizontal process” (p. 133). This idea of horizontal relationships resonates with Friedland’s (2008) call for academics to transcend boundaries between responsibilities to their institutions and sup-

port for initiatives that advance more socially just and ecologically sustainable food systems. To ensure that research is not abstracted from social movements, Friedland called for visible knowledge creation through “transdisciplinary, and transuniversity networks of researchers who, while fulfilling individual responsibilities in our universities also aim at supporting alternative agrifood social movements” (p. 198).

The literature presented in this section described two different CCE orientations, conventional and transformational, and the ways that horizontal relationships between campus and community partners can strengthen the work of social movements. Returning to our central research objective of investigating whether campus engagement with community-based organizations strengthens food movements, this literature raises a key question: Do collaborators’ orientations to CCE make any difference to the roles they play in practice, to the tensions that can occur, and thus to the impact of the collaborative work? Put another way, are specific orientations to CCE better suited to collaboration with food movements? Turning to our empirical research, we address this question by unpacking the key themes that emerged from our case studies.

Case Studies and Methods

The primary focus of our research was to analyze the relationships between community and campus partners using a participatory action research methodology. Participatory action research is premised on the principles of participatory engagement, systematic inquiry, and action for change (Macaulay et al., 1999; van de Sande & Schwartz, 2011). It is a flexible and fluid process that seeks to understand the world by transforming it through collaboration with those most affected by the issues being studied. The five case studies described in this article were all part of CFICE’s CFS Hub between Fall 2013 and Summer 2014. Each project was originally selected as a case study because of its alignment with the primary goals of the Hub: to build stronger links between research and policy advocacy, to improve CCE partnership models, and to advance more socially just and ecologically sustainable food systems in Canada. Further, each of the collaborations was initiated independent of and prior to its involvement with CFICE. Prior to the commencement of research, a general ethics approval was secured for the study of human subjects by CFS Hub researchers through Carleton University’s Research Ethics Board (REB). Through this process, the REB determined that the research met appropriate ethical standards as outlined in Canada’s Tri-Council Policy Statement:

Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (<http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/>) and Carleton University's Policies and Procedures for the Ethical Conduct of Research. Each of the five case-study projects also gained separate ethics approval either through Carleton University or the academic partner's institution.

During the period of study, the five case studies were coordinated by an academic and community colead and supported by the CFS Hub Management Team (made up of two community and two academic coleads). In some cases, the research focused directly on the processes of engagement through partnership evaluations, and in other cases we analyzed the impacts of CCE that emerged through assessments of projects with independent aims. Detailed notes were taken at meetings with the project coleads and at periodic CFS Hub meetings where all project representatives gathered by teleconference to discuss successes, challenges, and emerging issues. The projects each submitted final reports based on their research and reflections on the partnership. The CFS Hub also brought the campus and community coleads together into broader discussions with academics and food movement actors at the 2014 meetings of FSC/RAD (in Halifax, Nova Scotia) and the Canadian Association for Food Studies/l'Association canadienne des études sur l'alimentation (CAFS/ACÉA; at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario). Finally, project collaborators made additional analytical contributions from their case study and provided input throughout the writing processes. Quotes and anecdotes are attributed to the projects in most cases, but some are presented anonymously to respect confidentiality.

Table 1 provides an overview of the five case studies, including the main contributing partners, primary purposes of collaboration and methods of CCE employed, selected outcomes, and their connections to food movements. These five studies took place across Canada and had a range of different objectives, yet a number of key elements tie them together. Each of these CCE projects went far beyond satisfying specific program objectives or funding requirements. They evolved from and were sustained by a shared commitment and vision that was developed in collaboration among a wide range of partners, though the extent of specific community or campus involvement in each project varied. Participants from each of these projects also reflected on the achievements of their partnership as they considered directions forward. As one of our participants noted during a CFS Hub meeting, "we work with other people because we can't change the world alone. The question that

seems less obvious is who do we choose to work with and is it effective?” Another commonality among the five case studies is that each fits within the broad goal of food system change embraced by a range of food movements. Notwithstanding these commonalities, the case studies show a range of experiences with collaborative engagement between academics and community partners.

Table 1. Overview of the Five Case Study Projects

	Primary Partners	Purpose of Collaboration and Methods	Selected Outcomes/Learning	Connection to Food Movements
Planning for Change: Community Development in Practice (Ontario)	Sustain Ontario: The Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming (staff and interns); Department of Geography and Program in Planning, University of Toronto (course instructors and graduate students)	To explore different models and policy initiatives to support municipal food procurement; Conducted surveys, interviews, environmental scan as part of a graduate CSL course	Students used theory, course discussions, and reflections to enrich the research; Partnership contributed to Sustain Ontario's (under-resourced) research needs and future work	Sustain Ontario works with food movements across the province and is an active member of FSC/RAD; Project was part of Sustain Ontario's vision for food system change
The Seed Community Food Hub (Guelph, Ontario)	Guelph-Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination; Food Access Working Group of the Guelph-Wellington Round Table; University of Guelph's Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship/Research Shop (graduate students, postdoctoral fellow)	Short term: to identify gaps and challenges with regional emergency food systems and assess potential improvement strategies; Long term: to support the development of a community food hub; Used CBR and various forms of knowledge mobilization	Partnership met community-identified research needs, increased awareness of key issues, and helped build a shared vision for change; Research provided evidence needed to develop a community food hub and secure funding	Project focused on shifting away from a charity-based approach to hunger toward a holistic model, recognizing inherent linkages among poverty, health and well-being, participatory decision making, and sustainable food systems
The Edible Campus: From Showcase to Living Classroom (Montréal, Quebec)	Santropol Roulant; Alternatives; Minimum Cost Housing Group; School of Architecture, McGill University (professor, students, staff)	To find a permanent home for rooftop urban farm and create a living lab for students and staff; To clarify links and divergences between partners' strategic interests; Conducted an evaluation of the relationships through interviews	Established urban agriculture project and living classroom; Institutional facilities made available to community organizations; Pushed boundaries of urban agriculture and public food provisioning	Initially limited interaction with food movements; Over time, partners recognized and connected to transformative food systems values and developed food movement networks
Community Food Assessment (Regina, Saskatchewan)	Community Food System Steering Committee; Health Promotion Department of Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region; Regina Education and Action on Child Hunger (REACH); Community Research Unit, University of Regina	To engage in a participatory process to improve community food systems; Conducted an environmental scan, needs assessment, and evaluation process through focus groups and interviews	Overcame challenges by consolidating partnerships; Academics generated research that was highly valued by community partners; Created an action plan that created new networks	Initially limited interaction with food movements; Project played a role in starting the conversation and building/connecting to food movement networks

Developmental Evaluation (Mission, British Columbia)	Long-term inmates Now in the Community (LINC); Correctional Service Canada; District of Mission, BC; Hope Central; School of Nursing, University of British Columbia (faculty)	To conduct a developmental evaluation to build on (1) an existing partnership formed around a critical ethnographic study of food insecurity and the transitioning from incarceration and (2) LINC's new agricultural social enterprise (Emma's Acres) that employs survivors/victims, ex-offenders, and offenders	Academics gained deeper understanding of the realities of offenders and ex-offenders; Produced valuable outputs (e.g., digital storytelling); Peer research assistants and research staff that had worked in the prison food system helped engage participants and contributed to research and knowledge dissemination	initially limited interaction with food movements; Project addressed issues of localizing food systems and sustainable agriculture with an emphasis on restorative justice; Over time, relationships were built with other CCE projects (through CFICE), FSC/RAD, and food movements
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Results

In this section, we draw on the five case studies to address two key themes that emerged from our research in relation to ways that CCE might support social movements and contribute to building socially just and ecologically sustainable food systems: (1) the roles of the different community-based and campus-based partners and (2) the tensions that emerged and how they were addressed.

The Roles of “Campus” and “Community” in Community–Campus Engagement

The contributions of campus-based actors. Although faculty and students played different roles depending on the project, they generally contributed knowledge and professional research skills that community-based practitioners lacked. Academics (whether faculty or students) also have the privilege of being able to take a step back from the day-to-day work of civil society organizations to consider the broader sociopolitical context, gather data, and critically reflect on research results. In our five case studies, academics working with community partners facilitated dialogues, integrated information from beyond the community context, and reframed issues to articulate them in new ways. Campus-based actors reported having a more concerted amount of time and space to analyze data as a part of their professional expectations. The contributions that academics provided were identified as being important to food movements. One of the community-based coleads commented,

Given my heavy load of responsibility... I rarely have the time to step back and reflect, as my workload frequently only allows for a reactive approach. I really appreci-

ated that the academics involved bring a methodical and rigorous approach to the work. They frequently reminded me of the original goals, possibilities and lessons learned from the project through their observations and suggestions.

Throughout the case studies, academic researchers also provided valuable new information, challenged accepted knowledge about the dominant food system, and helped civil society organizations reflect critically on their own strategies.

Evaluations of The Seed project noted that although many of the community stakeholders possessed a wealth of anecdotal evidence regarding the challenges facing the dominant food system, it was difficult to translate this knowledge into action. The participation of academics was seen as beneficial because they provided solid evidence demonstrating the problems with existing emergency food provisioning and suggested potential strategies for improvement. The campus-based research team was also able to integrate the opinions of stakeholders with experiences from other contexts about how to most effectively combat issues of food insecurity. The academics supported the ongoing efforts of the community partners and contributed to a gradual shift in the local discourse around food systems from a focus almost exclusively on emergency food toward using ideas of social justice, dignity, equity, and sustainability. The research results articulated both the current reality and the potential for change and were used to leverage advocacy efforts aimed at transforming the dominant food system more broadly. Although processes of CCE were challenging at times, it was also an invaluable way of building broad-based and meaningful support for what eventually became The Seed's vision of a community food hub.

Our research also found that having academics involved in CCE provided legitimacy (in the eyes of the public, funders, other academics, and the media in particular) to the projects. Collaborating with academics considered experts in a particular subject area proved useful to community partners. For example, in the case of Planning for Change, the two graduate students working with Sustain Ontario conducted environmental scans of municipal procurement programs in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom, as well as jurisdictions across Ontario. Their research (and academic affiliation) contributed to a successful grant application that enabled this work to move forward through a newly created network of community-based actors across the

province. In the Developmental Evaluation project, the university partnership with LINC helped to raise the profile of Emma's Acres (LINC's agricultural social enterprise) and broader issues within the prison system.

For the Edible Campus project, being associated with a high-profile institution helped raise awareness for Santropol Roulant through media coverage. Santropol Roulant also benefited financially through access to funds available within McGill University. According to an evaluation report on the CCE project, the stakeholders all agreed that the partnership enabled them to accomplish much more than if they had worked independently (*Made in Montreal & Lance*, 2014). Reflecting on their experience, one of the community-based coleads noted, "I think that the academics in this project helped to open some doors for the partnership, for example through publications, which then create opportunities for reflection, learning, and building legitimacy for community-based work."

The participants all agreed that academic knowledge should not be elevated above community-generated knowledge; nonetheless, there was consensus that the credibility brought by academics in the eyes of the public or the media could be used strategically. One of the community coleads spoke to the value of having academics involved in CCE work:

I think that one of the most important contributions of the academic partners is the legitimacy they accord to the community work and the integrity and importance of knowledge generated in the community. In some instances the credibility of academic partnerships and publications helps the community concretely in making a political case for their work or funding.

Although community-based practitioners were also active participants in the research, many commented that they were limited in what they could say publicly for fear of jeopardizing relationships with authority figures they might be trying to engage. For example, many community organizations were beholden to multiple funders, which caused challenges for doing movement-related work. One of the community coleads explained, "We have to be careful with the language we use, particularly around critique." This created a valuable role for academics, since they often had greater freedom to express dissenting ideas in a public forum. In one of the case studies, tensions arose around the way that research

was being presented because of the critical nature of the findings. Midway through the project, the funder articulated a new direction that was quite narrowly focused, a demand that dramatically changed the project's direction and limited the organization's ability to take a critical stance. However, the academics involved were still able to present their critiques (confidentially) to provide food movements with important knowledge and insight into the challenges that arose.

Finally, academics in our case studies had access to resources beyond those of the community-based organizations. This included paid time to conduct research and analyze data as well as access to material resources. For example, the CFICE project was able to provide community-based organizations with a small budget to support the evaluation of their partnerships. Supporting community organizations to leverage these resources was identified as a valuable part of CCE relationships since community groups have little access to research-related funds. In the case of the Edible Campus project, when Santropol Roulant lost access to the original location for the urban agriculture project in 2006, the provision of space on McGill's campus to reestablish the gardens enabled the project to continue. In this instance, a preexisting relationship with a professor at McGill enabled representatives to explore the possibility by engaging in negotiations with campus administration, faculty, and other departments. Through collaborative design and planning, which the team presented to McGill's administration, a totally reimaged project was relocated on the downtown campus. As the partnership developed, the faculty and students were able to leverage additional support from the university's Sustainability Projects Fund, which enabled the community partner to hire a gardening animator and support an initial demonstration project to expand and incorporate new growing areas (e.g., raised beds and an apiary). Links to the university also enabled the project to connect to the growing food movement on McGill campus that included a student-run gardening initiative and farmers market that has engaged many new academic and community partners.

The contributions of community-based actors. Our case studies represented a broad range of actors, from informal alliances to registered nonprofit organizations and public health offices. In each of the projects, community partners contributed the knowledge and experiences that formed the basis of academics' research and writing. Community-based actors also had a sophisticated range of research skills, as well as networks of relationships and context-based knowledge that academics lacked. One commu-

nity-based colead commented, “Academics need to recognize that research done within and by the community can be extremely rigorous.” This was evident in the high-quality documents that were produced as a result of the case study projects, many of which were researched and written by community-based actors. Partnerships with community-based organizations also provided academics with practical cases and tangible sites for constructive, critical, and meaningful research. Their profession requires academics to conduct new and innovative research; thus they are constantly looking for “real world” environments for their fieldwork. Project coleads noted that civil society organizations could also grant legitimacy to academics by establishing relationships with prospective research participants and audiences. Further, many academics also leverage community partnerships for their grant proposals and research.

In the case of the Developmental Evaluation project, the research would not have been possible without LINC’s contribution. With incarceration-related research, it is extremely difficult to reach the population of interest and get accurate and meaningful data. In particular, those who work within the prison system (e.g., individuals who were incarcerated, parole officers, correctional officers) are rarely willing to talk about the food system, particularly in the current context of cutbacks and the centralization of food production of some prisons. Because LINC is firmly established and well recognized as an ally of those who are currently and formerly incarcerated, the relationship enabled the academics to connect with the target population. In the case of *The Seed*, the community partners had well-established trust-based relationships with participants from vulnerable populations (e.g., people experiencing poverty and food insecurity) necessary for conducting participatory research. The community partners were able to effectively identify key research needs and priorities based on their extensive knowledge of the region. Throughout the project, the community partners helped the research team navigate politics and tensions within the communities. This became particularly important as the project moved into its later stages, which focused on action. These examples highlight the ways that community partners provided the researchers with legitimacy in the eyes of a wide variety of community stakeholders who might otherwise have been less inclined to participate in the research or pay attention to the results.

Community-based organizations are required to produce practical outputs from their work, and academics are required to publish research results in peer-reviewed journals and books. When the research and publications emerge from a partnership and

can be crafted collaboratively, their use and value can be mutually beneficial to all parties. For example, outputs from the case studies were used for meeting academic needs but were also identified as helpful for community actors in their strategic planning and for funding applications. The students in the Planning for Change CSL course were able to write papers and reflections to satisfy the course requirement while also contributing to a major report and grant proposal for Sustain Ontario. In the case of LINC, interactive sessions with participants of Emma's Acres contributed baseline data for future evaluations. The collaboration provided valuable research data for the academic partners and also helped LINC develop resources that contributed to insights for expanding their project. In the case of The Seed, academic and community collaborations provided evidence that was perceived as valuable by community members and key stakeholders due to the rigorous research process and expertise of the team. The research produced evidence that helped the community partners clarify direction for future action-oriented change. The research results were also useful for securing project funding and were integrated into grant applications. Research from the Edible Campus project was showcased at the Canadian Centre for Architecture as a part of their two very successful exhibitions: *What You Can Do With the City* and *ABC: MTL; A Self-Portrait of Montréal*.

Collaborations with community-based organizations were also found to lend credibility to instructors with their students. In a number of our case studies, connecting students with community-based organizations offered experiences that could not be gained exclusively in the classroom and provided an application and context for in-class learning. Like faculty, students also have the skills and resources to contribute to the work of civil society organizations and in some cases, the students were already directly affiliated with organizations working on food system transformation. For example, in the case of Planning for Change, the instructors were required to develop partnerships with community-based organizations for their graduate CSL course. As part of the pedagogy, it was important to build long-term relationships with social-justice-oriented organizations that had the capacity to manage students and facilitate meaningful research projects. The course would not have been possible without Sustain Ontario and its broad network of members. In the case of the Community Food Assessment, the partners recognized that students involved in the research were already engaged with the community organizations through clubs and volunteer work. In contrast, the faculty were not as clearly

connected, and their commitments and timelines were not as well aligned. For these students, participation in CCE provided the theoretical framework and analysis to complement their lived experiences.

In The Seed project, the academics involved were all graduate students at the time, and the project created opportunities to actively engage in their local community. One of the students went on to teach an introductory seminar course that worked with The Seed to provide further community-engaged learning opportunities to his students; another continued to be actively involved as a volunteer despite leaving her official role as a university researcher. Similarly, the urban agriculture infrastructure established at McGill University through the Edible Campus project has become a vibrant outdoor classroom, workshop space, and research site used by faculty and their students. Working closely with students (among others), Santropol Roulant creates opportunities for people to learn more about growing food in the city through hands-on activities by offering workshops on topics from seed saving to beekeeping. In addition to educational activities managed by Santropol Roulant, faculty and students use the gardens for multidisciplinary educational and research projects.

In summary, our research found that community and campus actors involved in the five CCE case study projects contributed significantly to research and teaching and to organizational objectives. Further, this collaborative work was identified as a central part of achieving the food movement goals of fundamentally reorganizing the way food is produced, distributed, and consumed as well as valued. However, participants also noted that more work was needed in order to ensure that these collaborations reach their full potential and are meaningful for everyone involved.

Tensions Emerging from Assumptions About Roles

As described above, campus and community actors can attain mutual benefit through CCE work. However, our research found that making assumptions about roles and contributions could become a significant barrier to effective working relationships. From a conventional CCE orientation, academics are often assumed to do research and teach, and civil society organizations are expected to focus on programming in the community. Although CCE participants may at times play these respective roles, it was also evident that roles were rarely fixed and often changed as the

projects developed. In our case studies, we found examples of academics involved in day-to-day work that supported civil society organizations. Likewise, we found examples of community-based actors deeply engaged in research and data analysis. Even when concerted efforts were made to clarify expectations at the outset (e.g., through discussion, terms of reference, and contracts), unexamined assumptions could become a major barrier to developing fruitful partnerships between campus and community actors. As the projects developed over time, strategic directions and daily tasks changed. Many of these shifts were unexpected and informal (i.e., original terms of reference remained unchanged) and were based on the particular context and needs of each project.

Understanding tensions: Unpacking differences through conventional versus transformative approaches to community-campus engagement. Analyzing the tensions that emerged within the community-campus relationships, we observed some significant differences among the five case study projects. In the case of the Community Food Assessment, the evaluation of the partnership revealed that there were very different perceptions of what role the academics were intended to play. For example, community partners expressed that there was a “lack of understanding and sensitivity to timelines” and that many of the academics did not act as “full partners” and selectively “chose their level of involvement” as the project progressed. In contrast to the community partners’ expectations, academics described their role as primarily “supervisory.” One academic commented, “There was no professional incentive for my involvement; it was just my area of interest... I am surprised to learn that concerns have been raised. We thought everything was just fine.” This was identified as a major lesson learned by project partners and as a topic vital to address within future collaborations. At first glance, it appears that these relationships represented fairly conventional forms of CCE. Upon closer analysis, we also observed that the academics lent their expertise and other resources to the community-based partners in pursuit of the project’s objectives. Still, the partners remained distinct, with their work largely separated except for specific contributions of traditional academic support such as supervising research outputs. Here, campus and community partners adopted an approach whereby academics were more distant. However, the evaluation work suggested that this form of CCE was appropriate for academics and was still valued by the community partners. Further, it also helped move other types of community and policy action initiatives forward.

In the case of the Developmental Evaluation project, the relationship had elements of both conventional and transformative approaches. In its early stages, the academic researcher and LINC were already partnering on a research study initiated by the campus partner examining food insecurity and the transition from incarceration. However, as the partnership developed, the collaborative initiation of a developmental evaluation helped evolve the relationship to take a more transformative orientation that included developing horizontal relationships. Both the academic and community partners realized they were working toward a common goal of social justice that included a critical assessment of the food system within the prison context and for those transitioning from incarceration. Because LINC controlled the funds, direction, and pace of the Developmental Evaluation project, the academic partners were forced to step back at times, reflecting a relationship that disrupted conventional (and assumed) roles. Since there has been limited research around the food system within the prison context, the project added significantly to the existing knowledge about food systems and marginalized populations, yielding results that could be shared and extended beyond the prison context. The research helped to clarify the interrelationships of food, health, and justice systems within social and political contexts and how the food system within the prison context does not foster mental health. Through firsthand accounts obtained from interviews and the textual data that was produced, the campus and community partners gained a deepened understanding of how multiple systemic factors and social locations intersect and contribute to inequities for those in the prison system and the people that support them. This relationship also suggested that developing more horizontal relationships required academics to adjust their expectations and be willing to forgo their own desired outputs and control over the project. The transformational CCE orientation was necessary for building authentic relationships within the communities and connecting to food movements more broadly.

Similarly, in the case of The Seed project, the work began with a conventional CCE orientation. Initially, community organizations approached the university looking for specific answers and models to fix a problem. However, it became clear over time that leading the project was not an effective role for the university to play. Eventually, the partners decided together that the university should take on a more supportive role that included sharing information to help support decision making. A key turning point in the relationship occurred during the first phase of the research,

when it became clear that the partners had been working under different assumptions regarding their roles. This process of clarifying roles and expectations was a gradual one that happened over the course of many meetings (both formal and informal). As the research team negotiated with the many partner organizations, the relationships between campus-based and community-based actors shifted to become more horizontal. This enabled the research to take on an activist orientation as the project evolved.

Addressing tensions and challenges in community-campus engagement: The importance of critical reflexivity and respectful relationships. Given the potential disconnects between the assumed contributions and actual roles, communication and flexibility were identified as critical for effective CCE. Because the case study projects were each working with different approaches and methodologies, we observed that CCE worked best when partners reflected critically on their practice. This was even more apparent in respect to social movement building, where the relationships were intended to be long-term, and the goals of the work extended beyond the immediate needs of both the academic and community partners engaged in the projects. An example was the requests from project coleads to hold regular in-person meetings as opposed to relying strictly on virtual communication among the CFS Hub projects. There was also an expressed desire to use these meetings to participate in an ongoing and interactive dialogue about problems that arose as well as to learn from the other case studies. The CFS Hub Management Team helped to facilitate regular teleconferences and in-person meetings between campus and community partners as often as possible. The case studies also revealed the importance of reflexivity among all actors in their work together. In some cases, this reflexivity came through formal evaluation processes and critical questions supported by the CFS Hub that forced project coleads to reconsider their assumptions. In other cases, community and campus actors challenged each other to reconsider their assumptions and ways to move forward. For example, the final report from the Community Food Assessment project (*Beaudry-Mellor, 2014*) discussed the evaluation process in which participants critically reflected on the contributions and value of all the different partners involved.

Developing meaningful communication takes significant time and effort. In the case of The Seed project, both the university and community partners were working together for the first time as well as with a new network of organizations. This meant that each partner lacked clarity around expectations and processes of CCE.

Open and honest communication along with critical reflexivity did not happen in a meaningful way until a crisis provoked by miscommunications and assumptions on all sides threatened the project's ability to move forward. In part, this was because pressure from community partners and other key stakeholders led the research team to focus on trying to meet tight deadlines. The campus-based Research Shop played an important role by providing a structured space for members of the research team to engage in dialogue about their experiences. As the collaboration matured and the partners worked through various challenges such as miscommunications, the level of trust increased dramatically, which facilitated a more effective research–action partnership. Once relationships were well established, it became easier to communicate and in some cases, this happened on an informal basis (e.g., during social gatherings held outside official CCE activities). As the project developed, the responsibilities and expectations of the partners became clearer and over time, the trust and good faith between the partners grew to such a degree that they began to consider themselves colleagues as well as friends pursuing a shared agenda for community change. The importance of this transformation cannot be overstated as without it, the successes of The Seed's community food hub initiative would have been far more difficult to achieve.

In a number of the case studies, preexisting relationships were identified as an important factor for addressing tensions that arose over the course of the project as well as for developing critical reflexivity and maintaining effective partnerships over time. For some, these relationships evolved informally; for others, they had developed over the course of earlier CCE projects. In the case of *Planning for Change*, the instructor had worked in the nonprofit sector and brought his community networks into teaching the CSL course. The partnership was seen as a way to advance the curriculum and support the work of the community colead and a food movement agenda. In practice, this meant that although the project focused on municipal procurement, the broader goal of the work was to build new networks of scholars, activists, and civil servants who were working toward a more socially just and sustainable food system. This preexisting relationship enabled both campus and community coleads to anticipate some of the challenges that might arise and to deal with new challenges effectively. It also enabled the partners to develop a culture of collaboration in which both coleads understood how to gain mutual benefit through a CSL course, and it established the basis for Sustain Ontario to work with CSL students in subsequent years. In the case of the *Developmental*

Evaluation project, the campus and community partners also had a relationship antedating the CCE project. Since this preexisting relationship had centered on an advocacy project for food system sustainability, it was understood that the partners shared a commitment to the community they both lived in. The community colead noted that this helped to make everyone involved feel like they were on more of an “equal footing from the get go.” It also meant that the university was not imposing anything on their organization, but rather that the project was able to develop from the ground up.

In summary, our case studies highlighted the ways that partnerships need to honor the diversity and the distinct organizational cultures of campus and community actors. This means the structure, processes, and communication tools need to be well established and flexible and aimed at maximizing inclusiveness through cultivating contextual fluidity—that is, placing the relationships and the vision at the heart of CCE work while remaining open to the way projects shift and present new opportunities (see *Stroink & Nelson, 2013*). Our research also suggests that a simple dichotomy of conventional versus transformational orientations does not account for the complexity of actual CCE relationships in practice. In view of the shifting and fluid nature of CCE projects, it appears more important to focus on reflexivity that can be developed through colearning and adapting, as well as on commitment of all partners to figuring out how to make CCE work in a way that fits each participant’s context and constraints.

Discussion

The research from the five case studies we presented addresses the intersections between campus–community research and teaching partnerships with the goal of building socially just and ecologically sustainable food systems. The CCE projects are all engaged in food systems work, with each using a particular partnership model, initially with different orientations that presented both opportunities and challenges for advancing the work of food movements. We observed that both academic and community-based actors made important contributions to the CCE projects and when partners cultivated cultures of collaboration, which included mutual benefit and reciprocity in their relationships, significant gains were realized for those involved and for broader food movement goals. However, we have also indicated where challenges and tensions arose through the projects that presented barriers and were less constructive for movement building. In this final section, we reflect on the lessons from these CCE projects and address the

implications of scholar-activists engaged in these kinds of partnerships for food movements.

Results from the research with our five case studies showed examples of both conventional and transformative orientations that played an important role in the CCE projects. However, analysis also showed that these initial orientations and the models of collaboration changed over time in response to the specific context of the projects and based on the needs and objectives of each partner. Thus, although the conventional–transformative spectrum may be a valuable heuristic tool for analyzing the different orientations, in reality, our case studies exhibited a variety of approaches that lay in between the two poles and even oscillated between them. It also became apparent that each of these approaches to CCE could and *did* contribute to strengthening the work of the specific projects and to food movement goals. From this analysis, we suggest that conventional forms of CCE are not always problematic or negative. Indeed, conventional forms of CCE have an important place in higher education and may generate significant community benefits—if they involve open communication, flexibility over time, and consideration of individual and collective processes and if they are seen as mutually beneficial by all those involved.

Nonetheless, the literature and our case studies suggest that conventional orientations of CCE may not align as well with food movements since community-based knowledge production (including place-based knowledge) is often unrecognized or regarded as less valuable than academic knowledge. As described in the literature and confirmed through our case studies, transformative CCE orientations require adopting social change orientations, redistributing power, and developing authentic relationships. We suggest that transformative CCE orientations should be pursued to better meet food movement goals of fundamentally reorganizing the ways food is produced, distributed, and consumed as well as valued. Pursuing these types of partnerships also demands a focus on broader system change including changes in university culture, funding structures, administrative bureaucracy, and the lack of institutional support for academics' engagement in CCE.

Beyond simply studying social movements or sharing their research with activists, many academics that were part of our case studies were deeply embedded within food movements through their research, teaching, and activism. Cancian (1993) referred to this as a “two career strategy,” where academics produce outputs that make significant contributions to both scholarship and social movements. In our case studies, we identified a subgroup of profes-

sors, students, and other institutional players with a commitment to transforming the dominant food system. There is a strong presence of scholar-activists in Canada's food movements, and the case studies provided insights into what this looks like.

A further observation is that the roles of those involved in CCE are not fixed and can change significantly over the course of a project. The multiple and often overlapping subject positions that campus-based and community-based actors play can push the boundaries of conventional forms of collaboration. It is clear from our research that in the context of collaborative partnerships, the boundaries between scholarship and activism can be blurred through engagement in work that is useful to social movements. The fluidity of individual roles demonstrates that the lines between the campus and community can be highly permeable. This is especially prominent in the context of CCE and movement building because the motivation to become involved in collaborative work is often driven by an individual's values and social positioning more than organizational or professional mandates. Food holds a privileged place in people's lives and lends itself to encouraging the permeability of these lines.

In Canada, there is a unique history of collaboration between campus and community actors in respect to the development of food movements. Levkoe (2014) described how two pillars of Canada's food movements, FSC/RAD (an alliance of food movement organizations) and the CAFS/ACÉA (an alliance of academic and community-based researchers), were both established by academics and community-based practitioners engaged in promoting socially just and ecologically sustainable food systems. This is exemplified by the establishment of CFICE (with FSC/RAD and CAFS/ACÉA as core partners) and the work within the five case studies described in this article. FSC/RAD acknowledged that the CFICE case study projects helped to advance organizational thinking on when, how, and why to engage with academics in food systems work. Although the CFS Hub has roots in the academic community and FSC/RSD has connections with community-based work, the partnership created a bridge between academics, communities, and food movements, building relationships that mobilized and shared valuable knowledge and practices. The partnership also contributed to creating longer lasting networks between campus and community actors across Canada that have already been fruitful for new partnerships around building solutions to problems within the dominant food system. For example, the experience of being involved in the CCE projects helped FSC/RAD to develop a formal

protocol addressing ways to engage with academics. In short, these types of bridging initiatives can play an extremely valuable role in supporting the partnerships and sharing lessons learned through CCE in an accessible way to further food movement goals.

Limitations and Areas for Further Research

Within PAR projects, associations like the CFS Hub and social movement organizations like FSC/RAD can help bridge gaps between academic and community partners as well as place-based projects and social movements. However, we need to better understand and work with limitations, including ones that we have observed in this research. For example, this study is limited by its focus on only 1 year of the case study's work and would benefit from longitudinal research. Future research could explore the ways that CCE partnerships are best sustained over time. In addition, more research is needed on the long-term impact of CCE projects in respect to food movement goals of building just and sustainable food systems. These collaborations might also provide valuable information on ways to better support CCE more generally.

Working to transform any one element of the food system demands considering and acting on the multitude of internal and external factors that affect that system. No single civil society organization or campus-based actor can possibly accomplish this task alone. Social movements require substantial popular mobilization, and the collaborations established through CCE projects can be strategic in building a broad-based popular movement to address the complexity of local and regional concerns along with the impact of global issues. This research shows that moving toward more transformative CCE orientations can be an important part of movement building through mobilizing to effect social and environmental change. Developing transformative CCE orientations and horizontal relationships, however, also means cultivating cultures of collaboration that go beyond any one organization or institution and finding resonance with social movement goals. As we have demonstrated in this study, participatory action research not only expands our knowledge about CCE relationships and practices, but can also serve to strengthen these partnerships in the process. We suggest that future research might work to build and strengthen networks of academics and practitioners while simultaneously exploring their impacts. In this way, participatory action research might also be conducted between different social movements to encourage more diverse kinds of collaboration that would further social and ecological goals.

Conclusions

In this article, we have described the ways that CCE can contribute to social movement building. Focusing on food movements in Canada, we have addressed the underexplored nature of CCE relationships among community-based and academic partners with explicit goals of social and environmental change. Our research has brought a range of literatures into conversation, and our analysis of five case studies presents empirical evidence that breaks new ground in the existing literature. We have shown that while both conventional and transformational orientations of CCE can strengthen the work of social movements, the latter may be better suited to promoting transformative goals. Further, we have identified some key opportunities and tensions that emerge from relationships between campus and community partnership initiatives.

In closing, we maintain that when CCE is based on building horizontal relationships rooted in solidarity, the potential to challenge the power dynamic between academic institutions and the broader public and contribute to the goals of social movements is increased. Without discounting the specific skills of individual researchers and community-based actors, we advocate working in collaboration to conduct research, analyze data, clarify understandings of broader contexts, and encourage different kinds of critical reflection toward developing new strategies for action. Activist research also offers complementary benefits to conventional academic understandings of sociopolitical realities. Connecting CCE projects at the local level through social movements increases the potential to collaborate more broadly, learn from others, and influence public policy.

Our research suggests that although the values of transformational CCE may be better aligned with social movements than conventional orientations, the distinction between these two documented approaches should not be overemphasized and may, in practice, be less important than other factors such as critical reflexivity, ongoing communication, mutual benefit and reciprocity (including respect and working to understand and accommodate various contexts and constraints), and flexibility over time. These additional factors are especially important when individuals involved in CCE play the dual role of scholar-activists. Some CCE partners may not adopt a critically reflexive stance; however, partner orientations and collaborative processes often develop and change based on the context and connections within a particular project. These moments of change offer the opportunity for the

reflection, communication, and accommodation that appear to be critical for success.

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